

The Victoria NATURALIST

NOVEMBER
DECEMBER
2000
VOL 57.3

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





Published six times a year by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4
Contents © 2000 as credited.

ISSN 0049-612X Printed in Canada

The Victoria Naturalist acknowledges the financial support of the
Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program
towards our mailing costs.

Publication Mail Commercial Sales Agreement Number 1273108

Publications Mail Registration No. 09841

Editor: Marilyn and Ross Archibald, 384-3063

Desktop Publishing: Frances Hunter, 479-1956

Distribution: Tom Gillespie, Phyllis Henderson

Printing: Fotoprint, 382-8218

Opinions expressed by contributors to *The Victoria Naturalist*
are not necessarily those of the Society.

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Honorary Life Members:

Miss E.K. Lemon, Mrs. L.E. Chambers, Mrs. Peggy Goodwill,
Mr. Vic Goodwill, Mr. David Stirling

Officers: 1999-2000

PRESIDENT: Bruce Whittington, 652-1529, fieldnat@pacifcoast.net

VICE-PRESIDENT: open

PAST-PRESIDENT: Tom Gillespie, 361-1694

thomasw._gillespie@telus.com

SECRETARY: Maureen Funk, 477-6957, mfunk@islandnet.com

TREASURER: Gordon Hart, 721-1264, ghart@vanisle.net

Directors and Committees

Claudia Copley, 479-6622, dccopley@islandnet.com (*Membership*)

Robert Chappell, 388-4696, rwchappell@home.com

(*F.B.C.N. Representative*)

Sheila Mosher, 652-3502 (*Parks and Conservation*)

Darren Copley, 479-6622, dccopley@islandnet.com and

Rick Schortinghuis, 642-3596 (*Events, Trips and Programs*)

Marie O'Shaughnessy, 598-9680, moshaugh@pacifcoast.net

(*Publicity*)

Ross Archibald, 384-3063, rossarch@islandnet.com (*Publications*)

Ann Nightingale, 652-6450, motmot@home.com (*Social Comm.*)

Tom Gillespie, 361-1694, thomasw._gillespie@telus.com

(*Scholarships, Awards*)

Other Functions

Birder's Night: Bryan Gates, 598-7789

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary: Dannie Carsen, 595-2773

Annual Dues, Victoria Natural History Society

Includes *The Victoria Naturalist* and *B.C. Naturalist*

Regular \$30.00 Golden Age \$25.00

Family \$35.00 Junior Subscriber \$20.00

(Any donation in excess of the above fees is income tax deductible)

Annual Subscription Rate, Victoria Naturalist \$20.00

RARE BIRD ALERT: 592-3381 **VNHS EVENTS TAPE:** 479-2054

SUBMISSIONS

Deadline for next issue: December 1, 2000

Send to: Marilyn and Ross Archibald, Editors
208 Linden Avenue, Victoria, BC V8V 4E4
Phone: 250-384-3063 (no calls after 9:00 p.m. please)
Fax: call to arrange
e-mail: rossarch@islandnet.com

Guidelines for Submissions

Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, birding
and botany notes, and book reviews with photographs or illustrations if
possible. Photographs of natural history are appreciated along with docu-
mentation of location, species names and a date. Please label your sub-
mission with your name, address, and phone number and provide a title.
We will accept and use copy in almost any legible form but we encourage
submission of typed, double-spaced copy or an IBM compatible word
processing file on any size diskette, plus printed output. Having copy
submitted on diskette saves a lot of time and work for the publications
group and we really appreciate the help. If you have an obscure or very
old word processing program, call the Editors, Marilyn and Ross Archibald,
at 384-3063 (before 9:00 p.m.), or save the text in ASCII format. Blank
diskettes may be obtained from the editor and we will return any of your
own diskettes submitted. Photos and slides submitted will be returned if
a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material.

VNHS MEMBERSHIP

For membership information and renewal, please contact Claudia Copley,
479-6622, or write to Membership Committee c/o The Victoria Natural
History Society, Box 5220, Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4.

ADVERTISING GUIDELINES

We do our best to ensure your ad is produced accurately. Should we
make an error, please contact us and a correction can be printed in the
next issue. A charge is levied for typesetting. Minor alterations to exist-
ing ads cost \$10.00. Add \$15 per photo for PMT. Advertising fees are
due and payable when copy is submitted. Please submit a cheque pay-
able to The Victoria Naturalist.

Ad Size	Price	Dimensions (in inches)
Back page	\$120	7.5" width x 8" height
Full page, inside	\$100	7.5 width x 9.5" height
1/2 page, horizontal	\$80	7.5" width x 4.75" height
1/2 page, vertical	\$80	3.5" width x 9.5" height
1/3 page horizontal	\$50	7.5" width x 3.25" height
1/3 page, vertical	\$50	3.5" width x 6.5" height
1/4 page, horizontal	\$40	7.5" width x 2.25" height
1/4 page, vertical	\$40	3.5" width x 4.75" height
1/8 page, horizontal	\$25	3.5" width x 2.25" height

Rates as of February, 1994. May be subject to change.

Submit advertising to:

The Victoria Naturalist, P.O. Box 5220,
Victoria, B.C. Canada, V8R 6N4
or phone Marilyn or Ross Archibald at 250-384-3063

Thank you for your patronage.

Contents

Western Mexico Trip Report <i>By Marilyn Lambert</i>	4
Animals under the Ice <i>By Jacqueline S. Lee</i>	6
Second Century of the Christmas Bird Count: A Victoria Challenge <i>By J. Cam Finlay</i>	7
Buff-breasted Sandpiper <i>By Bob Houston</i>	8
Native Plants to Keep the Winter Green <i>By Maureen Funk</i>	9
Purple Martin Nesting Box Program <i>By Kevin Storey</i>	10
An Invaluable Natural Resource <i>By Joan Cowley</i>	11
Websites "Por Costa Rica Aficionados" <i>By Keith Taylor</i>	12
New Members.....	13
Victoria Naturalists at Hurricane Ridge <i>By Bev Glover</i>	14
VNHS Green Spaces Project <i>By Tony Embleton</i>	16
Waterfront Shorebird Field Trip Notes <i>By Marie O'Shaughnessy</i>	17
HAT Campaigns to Save Laughlin Lake <i>By Eric Lofroth</i>	18
President's Report.....	18
Christmas Bird Count 2000 <i>By Dannie Carsen</i>	19
Letters.....	20
Calendar of Events.....	22

COVER PHOTO

Birding the banana plantation, La Bajada,
Mexico by Germaine Taylor

EDITORS' NOTE

We love letters, even if they are not love letters. It is
great to see members, and others using the *Naturalist* as a
vehicle for communication.

One letter this issue has given us particular pause
to reflect. This letter generated much discussion by the
Society directors, both in e-mail form as soon as we
received the letter, and when we discussed it at a directors'
meeting.

How are we to get across our message that the natural
world includes humans and we have a responsibility to
care for non-human creatures? Do we isolate peoples who
participate in activities that are not in the best interests of
our biosphere, or do we try to understand them so that we
can help them to see how their actions hurt themselves as
much as they hurt non-human creatures? If we are to
isolate some, are we to isolate all; even if it means giving
up using products manufactured by peoples who partici-
pate in activities similar to the ones we are censoring?

We recall hearing a priest say that the problem with
pointing fingers at someone else, is that there are always
three fingers pointing back at us. Has our culture been a
model of preserving our biosphere, or have we been guilty
of driving species to extinction in the chase for personal
profit? Have naturalists been blameless, while collecting
large numbers of specimens to be able to study and
illustrate them? Why do we now have protected species
such as the Gray whale? How are our present day activi-
ties threatening that species in disrupting and contaminat-
ing food sources for these creatures?

We also need to look at what we are as naturalists.
Is our role simply to observe, or is it to share what we
observe with others less observant? Understanding can be
called the wise application of knowledge. Remembering
that doing nothing can be tacit approval, do we take sides
in the debate, or do we try to facilitate understanding?

Marilyn and Ross

Western Mexico Trip Report

By Marilyn Lambert

The fourth annual trip to raise funds for the Habitat Acquisition Trust saw fifteen enthusiastic VNHS members basking in the warmth of Western Mexico from February 25 to March 10, 2000.

Our adventure started in Mazatlan. Long known as a beach resort area, Mazatlan provides some excellent birding opportunities just outside of town. Paul Beckman, General Manager of Pronatours, (a Mazatlan nature tour company) provided us with insights into some of the local, hot birding spots. We found great birds in this area and some of my favourites were the Citreoline Trogon, Black-throated Magpie Jay and a Vermilion Flycatcher glowing in the early morning sun. The adventure continued as we headed up the road into the Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains. Señor Beckman had arranged for our safe passage through this area. As we were strolling along the Panuco Road, watching Squirrel Cuckoos and Gray Silky-Flycatchers, a police vehicle stopped and a guardian, armed with an M-16 joined our group. After our initial shock at being so close to a loaded weapon, we thought it fun to have our own, personal protection. We continued on to Villa Blanca where five other guardians joined us. Now, feeling completely safe we carried on birding with our new buddies. When birders travel together there is always good humour and with our armed escort, there was no shortage of jokes. "You want a closer



Getting a closer look: armed guard checking the bird book. Photo: Edith Hunsberger



VNHS members at the Tropic of Cancer. Photo: Marilyn Lambert



look at that bird, Hee Hee!" and "Chachalaca, Yum-Yum". Our destination in the mountains was the Barranca Rancho Liebre, a spectacular area surrounded by pine-oak forest at approximately 8,000 feet elevation. As we stood at the edge of the barranca, marvelling at the beauty spreading out below our feet, we watched Mexican Junco, Pine Flycatcher, Red-faced Warbler and were entertained by a raucous gang of Tufted Jays. These beautiful jays are endemic to Northwestern Mexico but their numbers are dwindling due to habitat destruction so we were pleased to see them doing well in the Barranca.

Descending the Sierra Madre Occidental, we crossed the Tropic of Cancer and carried on down to the Pacific Coast at the sleepy fishing village of San Blas. Our base for the week was the Hotel Garza Canela and the Vasquez family took very good care of our group. We were out-and-about for a few hours early in the morning, back to the hotel for a siesta and swim, then off again after the temperature had cooled down. We took a couple of river boat trips where we saw Roseate Spoonbill, Rufous-necked Wood Rail, Boat-billed Heron, Northern Potoo (with incredible eye shine at night) and an enormous flock of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. We also birded along the Singayta road where we found a Laughing Falcon, Mexican Parrotlet, and a Stripe-headed Sparrow and took a mini-pelagic boat trip to Roca Elefante, an offshore seabird colony where Red-tailed Tropicbird and Blue-footed Booby nest. The coffee growing village of La Bajada made for an interesting morning. We drove up into a banana plantation and walked down the road under the tall shade trees through the coffee growing area. Shade grown coffee provides important habitat for birds and here we saw Elegant Trogon, Yellow-winged Cacique and several of "our" warblers on their winter vacation.

This trip was great fun. We covered a lot of ground, saw some beautiful scenery and had some excellent adventures. Our trip list was about 250 species and I thank David Stirling and Bruce Whittington for finding them. The trip was organized to raise funds for the Habitat Acquisition Trust. Bruce, Dave and I volunteered our time and all the profit from the trip was donated to HAT to further the work of habitat conservation on Southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Plans are currently underway for our next trip, this time to the Yucatan from February 17 to March 3. For more information, please call Marilyn at 477-5922.

Our time in San Blas is beautifully captured in this eloquent poem by Robert Lake.

Los Pajareros de San Blas

A flock of keen birders just arrived in San Blas
Burst forth in the morning before rays are cast
To waken the birds to soar in the breeze
And send in the owls to snooze in the trees.
Boiled eggs and granola to save as a treat
Bottles of sun lotion and gallons of deet.
Binoculars and cameras and lenses that zoom,
Notebooks and pencils and books to festoon
The pocketed vest, note the sensible shoes
And it's absolutely forbidden to have any booze!

They follow each flicker and avian screech
Hike the barranca and search on the beach.
A crackle of Grackles is admired with awes
While a vortex of Vultures receives great applause.
A squadron of Pelicans pass line astern
Each adjustment to flight is mimicked in turn.
A new bird when sighted brings points to the skies
Then, all in unison, binoculars rise.
It's a mystery to me how the whole lot
Manage to stand on the very same spot!

A mysterious bird sits high in a tree
With numerous pronouncements on what it might be.
They consult several books with beautiful plates
No computers for them with software by Gates.
Those colours on plates are way out of line
Tho' removing sunglasses would fix it just fine.
And the arrangement of feathers aren't the right form
'Cause the poor little beggar just weathered a storm.
The books are consulted, they search though each page
Perhaps it is time to call in the sage!

A Ferruginous Owl disturbing the night
Brings a sunhatted keen birder with intrusive flashlight.
Clutching pajamas, he stumbles about
With beam thrust aloft until batteries run out.
Neither prickly pear bush nor garbage smells
Nor insect bite that stings then swells
Deter the birder on his quest to decipher
Those characteristics that may lead to a "lifer"!

Each evening they return to Hotel Garza Canela
To service quite fit for Queen Isabella.
By the end of the trip they've got a huge list
Two hundred and fifty, there's few that they've missed.
Frigate birds can soar and do tricks in the sky
And Caciques can imitate the elusive Magpie,
They'll get not a glance, no matter the show
'cause they're now veteran birders in old Mexico!

Robert Lake
San Blas, Mexico
March 2000.

Animals under the Ice

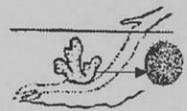
By Jacqueline S. Lee

While we don't always get ice forming on ponds and lakes during Victoria's winters, aquatic animals still have to be prepared. These animals are cold-blooded (poikilothermic) so their activity levels are regulated by temperature. As the water cools, activity slows. Respiration is considerably reduced and feeding often stops. Fish move to the deeper, unfrozen waters and frogs burrow into bottom sediments. Aquatic invertebrates also need to survive

the cold. The more visible ones include sponges, hydras, worms, leeches, snails, mites, insects and crustaceans.

When the water temperature rises in the spring, eggs will hatch, dormant forms will revive and aquatic animals will once again be active in local ponds and lakes.

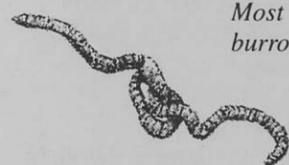
JACQUIE LEE is a biologist, living in Victoria, specializing in freshwater molluscs.



Sponges completely transform all active tissue into gemmules, in which form they can remain dormant.



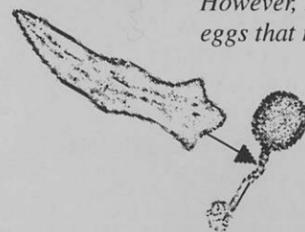
Hydra produces eggs with chitinous shells that remain in the substrate for the winter.



Most **worms**, including leeches, burrow into the substrate.



However, **flatworms** can produce eggs that resist freezing.



Many adult or juvenile animals persist under the ice.



Snails, crayfish, mites and aquatic insect larvae, such as those of **dragonflies**, retreat to deep, unfrozen water.



Aquatic beetles may occasionally replenish their air supply from the thin layer of air trapped under the ice.

Some planktonic crustaceans, such as **water fleas** and **copepods**, may remain somewhat active in the cold water.



Second Century of the Christmas Bird Count A Victoria Challenge

By J. Cam Finlay

This December 16th we would like to have all of the over 780 members of the Natural History Society, their families, relatives and friends participate in this year's annual Christmas Bird Count. This activity began in Victoria in 1924 and in North America in 1900. Be a Bush Beater (searching for birds in the fields and woods as part of a team), or a Feeder Watcher counting birds at your feeder for a minimum of one hour on that day. With your and others help, we are hoping to take the crown of Most Participants in the World away from Edmonton, Alberta and more recently North Bay, Ont. Two years ago, we almost did with our 524 participants, but Edmonton with 620 topped us and North Bay came out of nowhere to record 809 participants. Unfortunately, our numbers fell last Christmas with only 361 people out vs. Edmonton with 634 and North Bay with 950.

We need over 1000 people out there on December 16th to ensure Victoria becomes the most active bird watching community in N. America (the World Record of 1288 was set by Edmonton in 1987, the Centennial Year of Wildlife Conservation in Canada). Such participation sends a clear message to local and provincial politicians that people do care for natural areas and want more set aside. The year Edmonton set the world record and other communities had large numbers of Xmas counters, more land was set aside for wildlife conservation than any other period in Canadian history.

These counts, the largest and oldest bird census in North America, began in 1900 when 27 participants in 25 areas (in Canada — Toronto, Ont. And Scotch Lake, York County, N. B.) went out on Christmas day to do a "bird-census". The idea for the event arose in the latter half of the 1800s when unregulated hunting, sport shooting and, in particular the demand for decorative feathers to adorn women's clothing, caused the loss of hundreds of thousands of birds each year. Egrets, tanagers, orioles, gulls, terns and owls were the victims of the feather trade.

So popular were feathers, particularly on hats, that

"Harpers Bazaar" regularly mentioned them in its fashion column. In the fall of 1884, the stylish woman was advised to wear "dresses bordered with smooth soft feathers and birds' heads"; in the summer of 1899, "whole birds on walking hats" were the rage. Had the practice of unlimited hunting and feather gathering not stopped, many more species would be extinct today.

By the late 1800s, hunters began to notice a decline in game bird populations, and not wishing to run out of quarry, began supporting the concept of regulated hunting. However, they took no interest in the songbird numbers that were also decreasing. Fortunately, naturalists and scientists intervened.

In response to the rampant and often inhumane slaughter of birds to support the feather trade, concerned people began to establish conservation organizations with the main purpose of protecting all bird populations for future generations to enjoy. The American Audubon Society was founded during this time. This group encouraged people to stop wearing bird

feathers. The efforts of all these citizens were successful, culminating in the implementation of various laws in the early 1900s.

The early Audubon Society also produced a magazine entitled "Bird Lore" which was prepared and edited by Frank M. Chapman (the father of the North American bird field guides). He was a strong supporter of public education as a means of encouraging people to protect birds. The story goes that one fall day Chapman, while walking in New York's Central Park, counted the number of dead birds adorning ladies hats. He was so horrified that he returned to his office and wrote an editorial in "Bird Lore" (Vol. 2:192) condemning the massive slaughter. As an alternative he proposed a "Christmas bird-census" to be done on Christmas day and participants to send their "report of their 'hunt' to "Bird-Lore" before they retired for the night".

As an introduction to this proposal he discussed the "Side Hunt", an activity popular in the late 1800s, where sportsmen met on Christmas day, chose sides and then went

Chapman, while walking in New York's Central Park, counted the number of dead birds adorning ladies hats. He was so horrified that he returned to his office and wrote an editorial... condemning the massive slaughter.

With all those feeders across our community and the many retired persons and young families ...we should easily have 1000 participants this December 16.

out and shot any living bird or mammal they could put in their gun sights. At the end of the day the two sides would pile up the carcasses and give points for each — the rarer the species the greater the number of points. The side with the most points won. Chapman noted, “Hundreds of non game birds which were sometimes slaughtered during a single hunt were often published in our leading sportsmen’s journals, with perhaps a word of editorial commendation for the winning side”.

As Chapman hoped, his idea took off, with the first year reports coming in from 23 counts ranging from New Hampshire through Colorado to Pacific Grove, Monterey Co. California including Scotch Lake, N.B. and Toronto, Ont. The first B.C. count was done by Allan Brooks at Okanagan Landing in 1905. Edmonton came on stream the next year. In addition, in 1906 Allan Brooks did two counts in B.C., Okanagan Landing and Vernon. By 1912 Jas. (J.A.) Munro joined Allan Brooks at Okanagan Landing and Vancouver had its first count by A. W. Abbs. Allan Brooks was at Comox in 1920 where he undertook their first count. By 1924 there were three counts on Vancouver Island: Victoria’s first reported by J. A. Munro, Lake Cowichan by G. Buchanan Simpson and Comox Valley by Theed Pearce.

For the next few years Okanagan reports came in but I have no further records for Victoria until they conducted a count in 1944. It is interesting to note that in the same issue of the *Victoria Naturalist* giving the results of this count, in December of that year “two further records of hummingbirds were seen in the Oak Bay area”, probably the first Anna’s (not recognized then) to be noted in our area. Ever since that count in 1944, Victoria has held a Christmas Count each year.

By 1986, there were about 40,000 people out counting

birds in North America. That was the year Edmonton challenged the mayors of major cities across Canada to encourage their citizens to go out and participate in the count in preparation for the next year’s Wildlife Centennial. Several cities including Victoria took up the challenge with our city having 99 people involved and Edmonton taking the lead on the continent with 511 people. The next year, 1987, Victoria again tried to get people out to celebrate the Centennial and had 123 participants but Edmonton set the World record at 1288. Then for 12 years, Edmonton continued to be No. 1 in Christmas counters. Then in 1998 we almost beat them when we had 524 people out against Edmonton’s 620, but North Bay had 809! Finally, last winter we tried again, with more publicity and lots of effort by many volunteers, but Victorians stayed home with only 361 counters vs. Edmonton’s 634 and North Bay reported 950.

With all those feeders spread out across our community and the many retired persons and young families looking for things to do over the holidays, we should easily have at least 1000 participants this December 16.

To become involved as a feeder watcher pick up a count form by early December at Borden Mercantile off Mackenzie, For Wild birds and Gardens on West Saanich Rd., The Victoria Bird House in Oak Bay or the Swan Lake Nature Centre. If you want to be a Bush Beater and go into the field contact **Danny Carsen** before December 10th, evenings at **595-2773**.

Danny is revising the Bush Beater list format so any of you wishing to implement suggestions contact him at the number above.

Hope to see or hear from you and yours this December 16th.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper

I first saw this Buff-breasted Sandpiper on August 28, 2000 at about 7:00 pm at the 9th tee box of the Royal Victoria Golf Club. It was dusk, but I rushed home and brought my camera back to take a couple of photographs of it. Mark Nyhof also came down and confirmed it as a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Next day it wasn’t there; it was raining most of the day anyway. The day after was fine and sunny and I found it in the same place. It was very tame and could not be flushed. It walked to within 3 feet of me and I took a total of 14 photographs.

This little bird winters on the east coast of Argentina and flies east of the Rockies to nest in the Arctic tundra. In migration, it is seen in grassy areas and golf courses. It is also reported as being very tame.

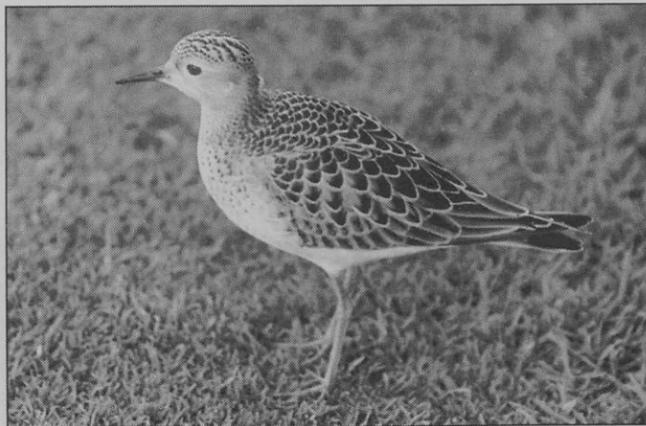


Photo: Bob Houston

Native Plants to Keep the Winter Green

By Maureen Funk, with thanks to Brenda Costanzo

Winter is coming and, while our lawns are turning green, everything else in the garden may soon fade. We are reminded at this time of the benefit of evergreens in the garden. When I think of evergreens in the garden or watch popular garden programs, I am inevitably confronted by plant choice suggestions that worry me.

Last year I walked through a beautiful ravine called Mystic Vale, cut by Hobbs Creek, running below the University of Victoria toward Cadboro Bay. One reason Mystic Vale is a special place is the spectacular display on the steep slopes of large Sword Fern (*Polystichum munitum*) and woodlands peppered with Pacific Yew (*Taxus brevifolia*). In the last few years, however, it has become littered with the remains of a major cleanup of English Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).

The reason for concern is that all the beautiful holly, grown mostly because it is evergreen, is spreading. Birds travelling into our wooded green spaces distribute the berries. It grows quickly and aggressively, shading out native shrubs. Other species, such as Daphne-laurel (*Daphne laureola*) and English Ivy (*Hedera helix*), grown because they are evergreen, are also a concern.

So, what is the solution? There are viable, beautiful, low

maintenance alternatives. Some are better suited to woodland shade, some to open sunny slopes. Evergreen native alternatives include: Tall Oregon-grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*); Low Oregon-grape (*Mahonia nervosa*); Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*); Evergreen Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*); False-box (*Paxistima myrsinites*); Lingonberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*); Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*); and strawberry (*Fragaria* sp.).

Other perennials that stay more-or-less evergreen during the winter are all great in a shady woodland setting. These include: Twin flower (*Linnaea borealis*); Large fringe-cup (*Tellima grandiflora*); Foam flower (*Tiarella trifoliata*); and Mitrewort (*Mitella ovalis*). The woodland suggestions will require moisture and mulch throughout the year. Used in clumps they will become an excellent ground cover.

So, head out to the native plant nursery nearest to you (Fraser’s Thimble Farms www.thimblefarms.com, Streamside Nursery Mars.ark.com/~barport/streamside.htm, or Woodland Native Plants 478-6084), or ask your regular nursery to responsibly bring them in. But that’s another article.

MAUREEN FUNK is studying at the University of Victoria, and is the Secretary of V.N.H.S.



HAT'S OFF AGAIN

YUCATAN — BIRDING ADVENTURE IN THE LAND OF THE MAYA

February 17 - March 3, 2001

Tropical birding, famous archaeological sites and beautiful Caribbean beaches highlight this tour to Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula.

Join David Stirling and explore tropical forests, marshes and mangrove lagoons to search for the area’s bird specialties. We’ll visit spectacular Mayan sites and explore their ancient temples and pyramids. The woodlands surrounding the sites provide shelter for birds and we may spot a Turquoise-browed Motmot from the top of the great pyramid at Coba!

Rich tropical flora and fauna, a spectacular cultural setting, a warm, dry climate and a leisurely pace combine to make this tour Mexican birding at its finest.

All proceeds from this tour will be donated to the Victoria Natural History Society’s Habitat Acquisition Trust.

For more information, please call Marilyn at 477-5922

Purple Martin Nesting Box Program

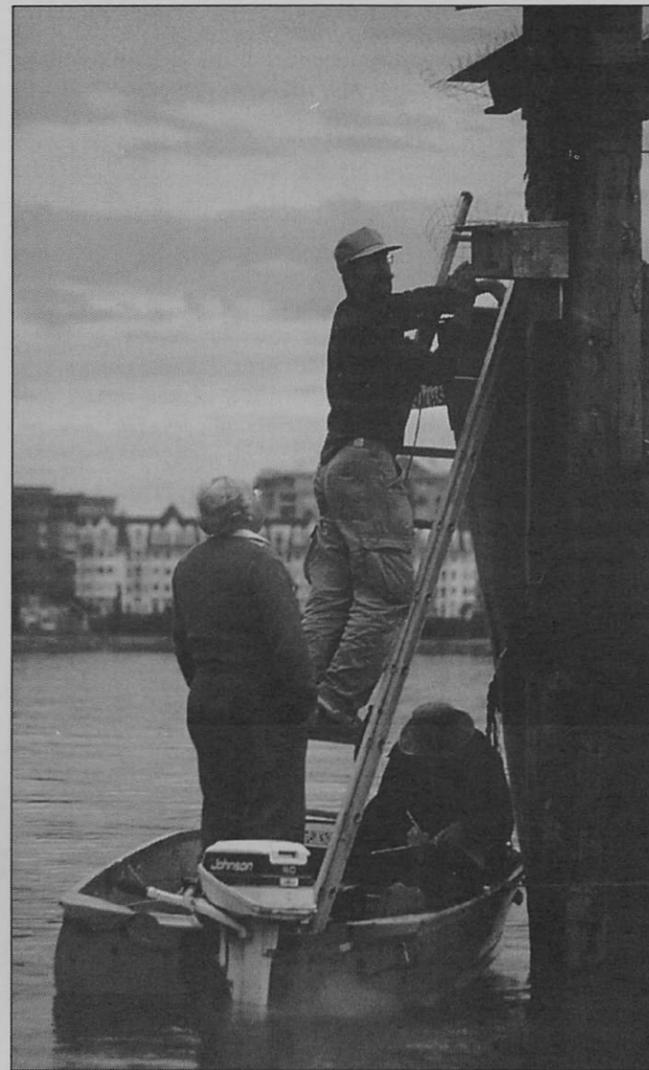
By Kevin Storey

Say the words Purple Martin to most people and they will tell you of the eastern birds thriving in the "apartment" style colonies in backyards and gardens. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the western subspecies of the Purple Martin (*Progne subis*). Here, due to competition from introduced birds and the continual loss of habitat, the Purple Martin came very close to extirpation from British Columbia. So close in fact, that, in 1985 there were only five known, nesting pairs in the entire province. A nest-box program, in effect for the last 15 years, has brought the numbers of nesting Purple Martins in B.C. up to over 200 pairs in 2000. Now this nest-box program needs your help.

Purple Martins are the largest swallow in North America and have a body length of about 17cm. Adult males are an iridescent purple-black. Females and immature birds are dark above and pale below. On returning from his first migration, a young male resembles the female but will have irregular blotches of dark purple-black on his chin, throat, breast, flanks, belly and crissum. Purple Martins have a superficial resemblance to the European Starling. Male Purple Martins may also be confused with the Black Swift. An easy way to tell them apart is the constant chatter of the Purple Martin while in flight. The Black Swift flies silently.

Historically, the Purple Martin has not been found in large numbers in coastal British Columbia. The area is the northern edge of its natural range. Living on the fringe of its range adds to the instability of life and makes its day-to-day struggle for survival that much harder. Studies show that Purple Martins eat only one thing: insects — and a lot of them. Weather can severely hamper the feeding habits of this bird. Just three days of cool weather (6°C or less) or heavy rain can mean the starvation of nestlings. In cool weather insects do not fly, hampering the adult Purple Martins' ability to forage for food and feed their young.

Purple Martins are cavity nesters. Historically, the West Coast Martins used abandoned woodpecker holes to raise their broods, usually on the edge of open water habitat such as the ocean or a freshwater lake. With the introduction of other cavity nesters, such as the European House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), the Purple Martin's struggle to survive on the fringe became that much harder because it was unable to compete with these adaptive and aggressive competitors. Wooden nest-boxes were first erected for Purple Martins in B.C. on wooden wharf pilings in Cowichan Bay in 1986, where the birds had been nesting in crevasses and on top of pilings. They took to the boxes immediately. When it was reported that Purple Martins were nesting in the portholes of abandoned navy vessels in Esquimalt Harbour, more nest-



Tom Gillespie, Cam Finlay and Stan Kostka.
Photo: Ross Archibald

boxes were erected there on wharf pilings in 1989. The same year, boxes were erected on wharf pilings in Ladysmith Harbour. These three sites are the original colonies of the Purple Martin nest-box program in B.C. There are now over fifteen active colonies on eastern Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. The numbers of Purple Martins are thought to be back up to historic levels.

Now we are turning to the general public and ornithology community for assistance. Having had such tremendous success increasing the nesting opportunities for Purple Martins, the monitoring and maintenance *Continued on page 11*

An Invaluable Natural Resource

By Joan Cowley

They come from all backgrounds. They come from all age groups. They come with varied skills, knowledge and abilities, but they all come because they share an interest in nature. They are the volunteers of Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary — they number close to 100, and in 1999 gave over 10,000 hours to the Sanctuary.

Over the past ten years, volunteers have become integral to the daily operations of the Nature Sanctuary. Volunteers do the upkeep and development of all the trails. They also maintain the native plant garden and nursery and this past summer installed a low water irrigation system in the garden. In addition, they work in the nature house, assisting with office duties, answering the telephone, and handling general inquiries at the front desk. The nature house displays are maintained by volunteers who do everything from taking the turtle for a walk in the sunshine to nursing sick bees back to health. A volunteer conducts weekly birdwalks on Sundays and Wednesdays, and a number of volunteers work with the program staff to deliver nature education programs to school children. Major fundraising activities and special events could not happen without the involvement of the many volunteers who are willing to do whatever is needed to stage these events.

When asked why they volunteer, the answers vary. As well as the common interest in the natural environment, some volunteers come because they enjoy the opportunity to work and interact with others. This is certainly true of a group of retired volunteers who come out once a week to help with a variety of site maintenance projects. As one volunteer stated: "These folks are great fun. Rain or shine, I always look forward to Tuesday mornings at the Nature Sanctuary." Others come to learn more about local natural history and gain job related experience. Most of the volunteers with the school programs are university students who are considering nature education as a career and many are



Volunteer James Clowater demonstrates the use of a plankton tow to Grade 7 students at Swan Lake

now working in local parks as naturalists. In fact, a number have stated that their experiences at Swan Lake were critical to a successful job search.

Whatever their reasons, those who come usually stay for some time. Among the long-term volunteers is Cora Shaw who has volunteered at the reception desk for eleven years. Bev Tandberg who helps with special events has also been volunteering for over ten years. Della Smith, another office receptionist, has worked at the Sanctuary for ten years working first in the school programs, then in the native plant garden, and finally in the nature house. Maureen Quedsted started volunteering with the school programs in 1991 and Ken Brown, who also started in 1991, continues to work with the site crew on Tuesday mornings. Bill Spriggs has been the volunteer beekeeper since 1992.

They come, they stay, and they add significantly to the sanctuary. The volunteers of Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary are indeed a super natural resource.

(For more information about volunteer opportunities at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, contact Joan at 479-0211, or check out the website at www.swanlake.bc.ca)

Continued from page 10
of the nest-boxes has unfortunately outgrown those few original dedicated volunteers. It is our goal to find people and organizations interested in taking an active stewardship role in their community to help maintain these critical nest-box sites.

We need people who will monitor nest-box sites for Purple Martin nesting activity in the spring and summer, record banded birds, report numbers of breeding birds, document the success of different nest-box designs, note when the birds leave the colony in the fall, and prepare the boxes for the next summer's occupants. Most of the nest-

boxes are mounted on old wharf pilings and are accessible only by water. Volunteers do not need to have their own boat, but should be comfortable boating short distances from shore.

If you would like more information, please contact **Kevin Storey** at 250-743-1888 or e-mail: Kevin-Storey@thebirdnerd.com.

The project is funded from the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, through the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. Thank you to project sponsors: BC Hydro and New Dogwood Lumber for their generous donations of building materials.

Websites "Por Costa Rica Aficionados"

By Keith Taylor

Before each excursion to Costa Rica, I spend an hour in correspondence with Richard Garrigues, the foremost Costa Rican birder. A confidante and colleague, Richard has been a consultant, contributing updated information on birding news and changes that have occurred within the birding circuit, such as accommodations, road conditions and birding sites and their bird populations, etc. This collaboration has been a complement to the newly revised "A Birders & Ecotourist's Guide to Costa Rica" (now in its 5th printing, a CD-ROM).

Richard now has an extremely interesting newsletter that informs readers of rarities in Costa Rica, changes in status and distribution, the newest nomenclature and even some links to Costa Rica's better birding accommodations. (<http://www.angelfire.com/bc/gonebirding/news2.html> (next newsletter new 53.html etc.)).

Richard also has his own home page that will be of interest to anyone visiting Costa Rica. The site includes an updated Costa Rican checklist (now 865 species) and a plethora of information on the country's birds at:

<http://www.angelfire.com/lbc/gonebirding/index.html>

Other Costa Rican links are:

<http://members.home.net/birdersguide/links.htm>

http://dmoz.org/Recreation/Birdwatching/southand_Central_America/Central_America_and_Caribbean/

For retirement in Costa Rica see:

<http://www.winterhomes.com>

Carinen Hidalgo is releasing a Cano Negro Refuge list for sale at the refuge sometime this year.

The following nomenclature may be used to update your "A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica".

Three species have been confirmed as occurring on slopes not designated in "A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica": Caspian Tern (Caribbean), Western Slaty-Antshrike (Pacific), and Black-and-yellow Tanager (Southwest Pacific).

Chimney Swift has been reported from Tarcoles and Manuel Antonio (Pacific) on several occasions, but the difficulty of separation between this species and Vaux's Swift leaves the status in doubt (problematic are those Vaux's individuals whose plumage has been soiled, thus causing the characteristics distinguishing the two species to be obscured). Although the Chimney Swift is larger and tends to glide more than Vaux's Swift, these characters are only useful to those who are very familiar with both species.

Taxonomic changes to names in Stiles & Skutch's "A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica"

- a. Name changes include: Olivaceous Cormorant to Neotropic Cormorant; American Swallow-tailed Kite to

Swallow-tailed Kite; Common Gallinule to Common Moorhen; Gray-fronted Dove to Gray-headed Dove; Common Barn-Owl once again Barn Owl; Gray-tailed Mountain-gem to White-throated Mountain-gem; Little Hermit to Stripe-throated Hermit; Spectacled Foliage-gleaner to Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner; Spectacled Antpitta to Streak-chested Antpitta; Fulvous-bellied Antpitta to Thicket Antpitta; Gray-headed Manakin to Gray-headed Piprites; Thrush-like Manakin to Thrush-like Schiffornis; Yellow-throated Brush-Finch to White-naped Brush-Finch; and Black-headed Brush-Finch to Stripe-headed Brush-Finch.

- b. Green-backed Heron split. Green Heron is found widely in Costa Rica with Striated Heron accidental at Canas.
- c. Black-shouldered Kite has been split with the American species (found in Costa Rica) named White-tailed Kite.
- d. White-bellied Chachalaca lumped into Plain Chachalaca by some authors.
- e. Rufous-fronted and Dark-backed Wood-Quails lumped and now named Black-eared Wood-Quail.
- f. Lesser Golden-Plover split from American Golden-Plover occurring in Costa Rica.
- g. Central American Pygmy-Owl (occurring in Costa Rica) split from Least Pygmy-Owl.
- h. Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl split from Andean Pygmy-Owl.
- i. Common Potoo split into Common & Northern Potoos, both occur in Costa Rica; Common in the southwest.
- j. Fork-tailed Emerald split: Both species occur in Costa Rica; Garden Emerald (south) and Canivet's Emerald (north).
- k. Crowned Woodnymph split with Violet-crowned Woodnymph occurring in Costa Rica.
- l. Barred Woodcreeper split with the northern species occurring in Costa Rica, Northern Barred-Woodcreeper.
- m. Buff-throated Woodcreeper split with northern populations (occurring in Costa Rica) named Cocoa Woodcreeper.
- n. Striped Foliage-gleaner (Woodhaunter) split with Western Woodhaunter occurring in Costa Rica.
- o. Slaty Antshrike split with Western Slaty-Antshrike occurring in Costa Rica
- p. Nightingale Wren split by Stiles with those in the south named Whistling Wren [AOU Scaly-breasted Wren], those in the north named Nightingale Wren. Ridgely does not consider the split viable; others rename Nightingale Wren the Northern Nightingale-Wren.
- q. White-throated Robin has been split with Dagua Robin (Thrush) occurring in Costa Rica (not official in 7th ed. AOU).

- r. Solitary Vireo has been split, the species occurring in Costa Rica is Blue-headed Vireo.
- s. Northern Oriole is once again split with Baltimore Oriole widely distributed in Costa Rica and Bullock's Oriole accidental.
- t. Blue-hooded Euphonia lumped with Caribbean E. musica and renamed Elegant Euphonia by some authors.
- u. Scarlet-rumped Tanager split into Passerini's Tanager (Caribbean) and Cherrie's Tanager (Pacific).
- v. Prevost's Ground-Sparrow split with Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow endemic to Costa Rica.

Welcome to New Members

JUNE, JULY, AUGUST

Mr. and Mrs. V. McKeen

Bowker Avenue

birds, especially owls! And native plants

Lynn Beak

Wildwood Avenue

Nancy Dolan

Hilda Street

M. Vacca

Beach Drive

Bernard Kenny

Fisgard Street

birding

E. Jane Dunkerley

Amelia Avenue

SEPTEMBER

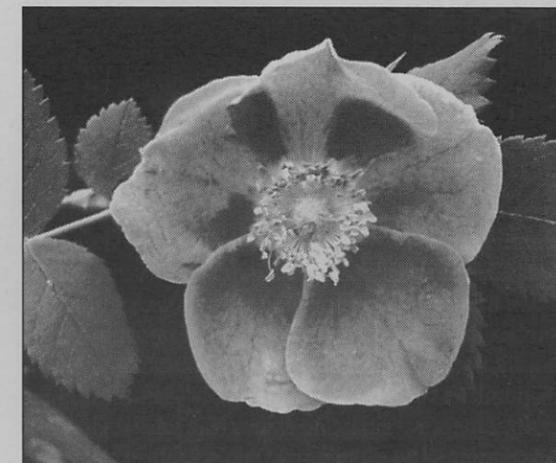
Colin and Susan Hoskins

Torquay Drive

Maureen Karagianis

Gorge Road West

birding, marine biology,
club night/social events

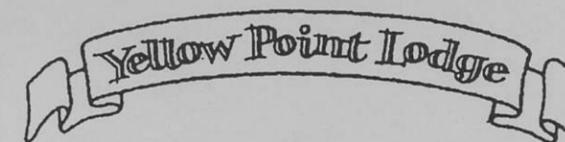


**precise color
processors ltd.**

QUALITY PHOTOFINISHING

747 Discovery Street, Victoria, B.C. V8T 1H1

Phone: (250) 385-5512



R.R. 3, Ladysmith, B.C. V0R 2E0
(250) 245-7422

Victoria Naturalists at Hurricane Ridge – the Sequel

By Bev Glover

Two weeks after the trip led by David Stirling to Hurricane Ridge trip, the second VNHS trip to the ridge departed on the M.V. Coho on August 5, 2000 with a full complement of eager naturalists. Thick fog and swells on the water made spotting birds and marine mammals a bit of a challenge. We did spot many of the usual species anyway.

We met the Olympic Van Tour operator who took us up out of the fog and into a fabulous, clear, warm day at the higher elevations. Due to an unforeseen circumstance, the payment for park entry was not ready (usually paid by the tour operator and is part of our fee). We were all prepared to pay the fee directly and pay the driver the remaining portion but we all had Canadian cash.

It seems odd, the national park would not take our Canadian money but did let us in free. Well, not exactly free. We sent a cheque to the park later in the day.

Once at the top of the ridge, we all set off along the trail. The flower season was progressing into its later stages but there were still areas of spectacular colour. The diversity of different species was the highlight. Many of the flowers out earlier were still present though not at their peak. Late

blooming flowers were appearing. On the return trip down the hill, we made two short stops, one at a small stream below the sub-alpine zone and the other at the lookout in the lower elevations of the park. Each location added more species to the list. One of the more interesting plants spotted at the stream was the Common Butterwort which catches and digests insects. Table 1 lists flowers and plants that we were able to identify and it is in addition to the list from July 23, 2000 featured in the last issue.

Some of us also spotted Mule Deer, Olympic Chipmunks and Olympic Marmots.

The sunny day meant that the butterflies were out. They were beautiful, moving from flower to flower. Derrick Marvin and Daryl Johnson focused on trying to identify them and helping us with their names. Their list appears in Table 2.

Of course, we were all looking for birds. Thirty-seven species (Table 3) were spotted on the water and in the park during the day. The high elevations did not have a great deal of species but it is always enjoyable watching what we did see.

It was a most relaxing and enjoyable day for all involved.

Table 1: Plants seen in Olympic National Park on August 5, 2000. (This list is in addition to the list for July 23, 2000)

<i>Abies lasiocarpa</i>	Sub-alpine Fir	<i>Paxistima myrsinites</i>	Oregon Box
<i>Acer marcrphyllum</i>	Big Leaf Maple	<i>Pedicularis bracteosa</i>	Bracted Lousewort
<i>Allium cernuum</i>	Nodding Onion	<i>Phylodoce empetriformis</i>	Red Mountain Heather
<i>Alnus rubra</i>	Red Alder	<i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>	Common Butterwort
<i>Anemone multifida</i>	Pacific Anemone	<i>Poleminium pulcherrimum</i>	Showy Polemonium
<i>Arctostaphylos urva-ursi</i>	Kinnikinnick	<i>Potentilla diversifolia</i>	Varied-leaf Cinqufoil
<i>Arenaria Capillaris</i>	Threadleaf Sandwort	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Self-heal
<i>Chamaecyparis Nootkatensis</i>	Yellow Cedar	<i>Ribes lacustre</i>	Swamp Gooseberry
<i>Claytonia siberica</i>	Siberian Spring Beauty	<i>Rosa nutkana</i>	Nootka Rose
<i>Delphinium glaucum</i>	Tall Larkspur	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Sheep Sorrel
<i>Douglasia leavigata</i>	Smooth Douglasia	<i>Sambucus racemosa</i>	Red Elderberry
<i>Erigeron compositus</i>	Cutleaf Fleabane	<i>Sedum sp</i>	Stonecrop
<i>Epilobium latifolium</i>	Red Willowherb	<i>Senecio triangularis</i>	Arrowleaf groundsel
<i>Epilobium luteum</i>	Yellow-willowherb	<i>Silene parryi</i>	Parry's Silene
<i>Geum triflorum</i>	Old Man's Whiskers	<i>Spiraea splendens</i>	Subalpine Spirea
<i>Hieracium albiflorum</i>	White-flowered Hawkweed	<i>Stachys cooleyae</i>	Cooley's Hedge Nettle
<i>Holodiscus discolor</i>	Ocean Spray	<i>Tellima grandiflora</i>	Fringe Cup
<i>Hydrophyllum fendleri</i>	Fendler's Waterleaf	<i>Thuja plicata</i>	Western Red Cedar
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Common Juniper	<i>Tsuga hererophylla</i>	Western Hemlock
<i>Luina hypoleuca</i>	Silverback Luina	<i>Veratrum viride</i>	Green False Hellebore (not quite in flower)
<i>Mitella breweri</i>	Brewer's Mitrewort		Cusick's Speedwell
<i>Montia parvifolia</i>	Little Leaf Montia	<i>Veronica cusickii</i>	Hook Violet
<i>Nothochebne nemorosa</i>	Woodland Beard-Tongue	<i>Viola adunca</i>	
<i>Orthocarpus imbricatus</i>	Mountain Owl-clover		



Photos: Jeff Diekmeier



Table 2. Butterflies spotted at Hurricane Ridge, Olympic National Park on August 5, 2000

Possible Species	Number
Rocky Mountain Parnassian	21
Anise Swallowtail	5
Pale Swallowtail	1
Pacific Orangetip	1
White sp. (alpine)	1
Western Sulphur	8
Sulphur Sp.	5
Mariposa Copper	1
Silvery Blue	10
Boisduval's Blue	18
"Rustic" Arctic Blue	5
Blue Sp.	50+
Zerine Fritillary	1
Hydaspe Fritillary	32
Arctic Fritillary	24
Fritillary Sp.	50+
Field Crescent	5
Crescent Sp.	20
Variable Checkerspot	19
Checkerspot Sp.	20
Milbert's Tortoiseshell	2
Vidler's Alpine	8
Chrxus Arctic	3
Western-branded Skipper	24
Skipper Sp.	100+

Table 3. Vertebrate sightings on August 5, 2000 at Hurricane Ridge, Olympic National Park

Olympic Chipmunk	Purple Martin
Olympic Marmot	Gray Jay
Mule (Black-tailed) Deer	Northwestern Crow
Double-crested Cormorant	Common Raven
Pelagic Cormorant	Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Great Blue Heron	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Canada Goose	Winter Wren
Green-winged Teal	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Mallard	American Robin
Northern Harrier	American Pipit
American Kestrel	European Starling
Blue Grouse	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black Oystercatcher	Dark-eyed Junco
Glaucous-winged Gull	Pine Siskin
California Gull	
Mew Gull	
Heermann's Gull	
Common Murre	
Pigeon Guillemot	
Marbled Murrelet	
Rhinoceros Auklet	
Band-tailed Pigeon	
Northern Flicker	
Olive-sided Flycatcher	
Barn Swallow	
Tree Swallow	

Waterfront Shorebird Field Trip Notes

Leader: Marie O'Shaughnessy, September 9, 2000

Twelve keen Birders, including our President Bruce Whittington, joined me at Clover Point at 8 a.m. A grey, drizzling morning was in store for us all but that didn't deter our enthusiasm, nor the birds that were evident at our various stops along the Victoria waterfront.

The tide was in our favour, allowing for birds to be searching for breakfast in and over the rocks. The weather was not typical for a September morning, however we had good looks at 5 species of gull despite the cold wind and rain. Heerman's, Western, Mew, California and the old standby, Glaucous-winged Gulls and their newly fledged young were all evident at Clover Point, as were Surfbirds, Black Turnstones, Least Sandpipers and Black Oystercatchers. Harlequin and Mallard ducks were seen as well.

Out past the kelp beds, we caught glimpses of Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots and Rhinoceros Auklets.

From Clover Point, we headed to the foot of Bowker Ave in Oak Bay where we gathered to examine the 'WORLD of BIRDS' through our binocular or scopes. Greater Yellowlegs, Killdeer, Black-bellied Plovers, Black Turnstones, and Surfbirds congregated along the exposed sandy shore dotted with various forms of kelp. The Red Knot that has been present here in the past years was not to be seen this day but that did not deter us from looking.

From Bowker Avenue we travelled onto Cattle Point, Spoon Bay and Loon Bay, none of which revealed any new birds that we hadn't seen already.

Since Viaduct Flats had been the Shorebird 'Hot spot' for the week Rick Schortinghuis and I decided to extend the fieldtrip for those interested birders and carpooled to the FLATS. This was a great decision for we were rewarded with impressive views of 2 beautifully plumaged juvenile Golden



Greater Yellowlegs. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

Plovers, 2 juvenile Stilt Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpiper, Western and Least Sandpipers and wonderful observations of a skulking Sora Rail, and Common Snipe. Sadly though, the two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers that many of us had observed earlier that week were nowhere to be found. Such is the life of a Birder! Various ducks were beginning to assemble here at the Flats. American Wigeon, Mallard, Gadwall, and Green-winged Teal were observed. I do believe that this great site will be most promising in the months ahead. Head out all you 'Birders' and enjoy the pure ecstasy of Birding.



VNHS Green Spaces Project

A Big Thank You to our Sponsors

The Green Spaces management team wish to thank our sponsors for the financial help they have given us. Their help has enabled us to continue our inventory, liaison, and educational tasks.

Our sincere thanks to:

- Canada Trust — Friends of the Environment
- Dannie Carsen and the Valentine Birders
- Habitat Conservation Trust Fund of B.C. Government
- Provincial Capital Commission — Greenways Committee
- Public Conservation Assistance Fund of B.C. Government
- Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia
- Three anonymous donors
- Victoria Natural History Society

Tony Embleton, Chair

An update

We are continuing to do plant and eco-system inventory and mapping at the Department of National Defence property at Mary Hill, and in the municipalities of The Highlands, Saanich, and View Royal.

We have obtained funding to purchase a Global Positioning System (GPS) instrument, which will increase our efficiency and accuracy.

We have also received funding to buy computer equipment in order to convert most of our previous and future data into an electronic format. This will make our presentations to land use planners more manageable and impressive.

We will be recruiting volunteers immediately. We will need data recorders, compass workers; as well as those who can identify plant species. We will be giving training sessions and mentoring while we are in the field.

If you are interested, please contact **Tony Embleton** at 595-6812, or **Norm Mogensen** at 477-9114.



Distinguished Service Award

The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is presented to a member who has contributed in some outstanding way to the aims and objectives of the Society. Awards are to be presented at the annual banquet in February. All members of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour.

Please forward nominations, by January 15, 2001, to Tom Gillespie, Awards Committee Chairperson at Box 5220 Station B, Victoria, BC, V8R 6N4

All nominations must be in writing, signed by at least two members of the Society. A brief biographical sketch and a description of the contributions and achievements of the nominee, along with his or her address and telephone number, should be included.

The Awards Committee reviews the nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which grants the awards. **For more information, contact Tom Gillespie at 361-1694**

HAT Tricks

HAT Campaigns to Save Laughlin Lake

By Eric Lofroth, HAT Projects Committee



On the northern half of Galiano Island's western shore lies the Bodega Ridge protected area. To the south and west, facing Georgia Strait, is the Pebble Beach protected area. Between the two sits Laughlin Lake, the largest lake on the island. The protection of Laughlin Lake is now underway, a project which will see the completion of most of a protected corridor from one side of Galiano to the other.

The lake's surface covers about 5.3 hectares (13 acres), and is completely contained in an 11 hectare (27 acre) property. The lake, ringed with forest, is fed from the northwest through a wooded wetland, and drains into Greig Creek, which ends its short run to the sea at Retreat Cove.

The lake appears on maps late in the 1800's. Apparently drained for pastureland, it disappears on subsequent maps. Local residents can recall livestock in the valley in the 1950's, but sometime after that, it began to fill again. It now looks like a healthy natural lake, and supports a colony of beavers.

Ken Millard of the Galiano Conservancy Association (GCA) is very excited about the Laughlin Lake project. The land is an extremely good buy, with a purchase price of only \$150,000, and there is an excellent chance of increasing the protected area around the lake in the future.

The property has been purchased by a "conservation buyer", who has given the GCA one year to repay the interest-free loan. HAT and the Islands Trust Fund have joined the GCA to complete the purchase. The Conservancy will own the land, and HAT and ITF will jointly hold a conservation covenant on the property.

The three land trusts are developing a fundraising strategy, and HAT's main role will be to accept donations from the greater Victoria area. Already, a VNHS member has made a \$1000.00 donation to start HAT's Laughlin Lake campaign.

This is a rare opportunity to save an intact freshwater ecosystem. We welcome your donations towards the purchase of Laughlin Lake. You may also want to consider giving donations to this project as Christmas gifts; HAT will soon have attractive Laughlin Lake gift cards.

Laughlin Lake is easy to find if you would like to see it for yourself. From the ferry dock at Sturdies Bay on Galiano, drive northwest on Porlier Pass Road. Turn right on Vineyard Way. A short distance up the hill, you will see the lake on your left. For more information on the Laughlin Lake project, call us at the HAT office, 995-2428.

President's Report

By Bruce Whittington

I was pleased to represent VNHS and HAT recently at a meeting with David Anderson, Federal Minister of the Environment, and MP for Victoria. The meeting was called to present an opportunity for discussion on the proposed Species at Risk Act (SARA). There were about 25 people at the meeting, representing local, provincial, and national NGO's, with a smattering of academics and corporate representatives.

The Minister explained the current status of the Act (it has only seen first reading) and several likely scenarios around its implementation. He felt that, regardless of the timing of an election, the Act would be passed by June of next year. His clear commitment to moving the legislation through Parliament will upset those who feel that there are improvements to be made. Many are of the opinion that the proposed Act is not strong enough in requiring that guidelines be followed, and that the penalties do not present enough of a deterrent.

In response to a question from Andrew Bryant of the

Vancouver Island Marmot Recovery Program, Anderson explained that this was not the last word. His goal is to see this Act in place as a first step, to be strengthened and improved upon in future. There is support for this legislation in the species at risk field. Some say, for example, that it is better than American laws. Others simply want to see the first step taken.

My inclination is to agree with Anderson; we are better off with this than with nothing. I see it as a situation where people may balk when faced with overwhelming change. But given the chance to give things a try, take things a little at a time, I believe people will not only accept legislation to protect species at risk, but will soon take pride in it, and begin asking for stronger laws.

There was one clear message which ran through the meeting. Support for environmental legislation of any sort comes much more easily from an informed public. VNHS can continue to play an important role, as a Society, and through its individual members, in educating the public about the wonders of our natural world.

Show someone its beauty, or a hidden mystery, maybe even a smelly salmon at Goldstream. Share what you know and love. Spread the word.

Christmas Bird Count 2000 – December 16

By Dannie Carsen

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on Saturday, December 16, 2000. Come on out and enjoy this Christmas tradition! The purpose of the CBC is to count birds observed within a 15-mile diameter circle in the Greater Victoria area. The circle is centred on the intersection of Grange Road and Jasmine Avenue in the Marigold area. Area leaders are designated for each of the following 20 land areas and 3 ocean areas. **If you are new to the Christmas Count and would like more information about the areas below, please call me at 595-2773 by December 1.** Otherwise, everyone who has taken part in the last few years will be phoned by the area leaders. Feel free to call your area leader if you have not had a phone call at least one week before the count.

Victoria Natural History Society members are encouraged to take part in the Christmas count as "bush beaters" or as a home based "feeder watchers". Cam Finlay and Lyndis Davis will be organizing the efforts for the feeder watch again this year. **For more information about taking part in the feeder watch, please call Lyndis at 744-5750.** Lyndis would appreciate your help to tally the feeder watch results

at Swan Lake on Saturday, December 16 and Sunday, December 17.

Area leaders, please send me your revised team lists (if you haven't already) to 3332 Doncaster Drive, Victoria, B.C. V8P 3V8 or phone 595-2773. This will allow updates to participant's names and phone numbers. I will be creating a brand new Christmas Count checklist (coordinated with the new VNHS checklist) that will freshen the bird species expected and remove the requirement for documentation for birds that are no longer exceptionally rare (such as Savannah sparrow and Black Scoter). Area leaders may pick up their packages at November Birders' Night.

The post-count gathering will take place at a new location this year. Please come with your count area reports and enjoy the tall tales, desserts and beverages that are part of the wrap-up to the Christmas Bird Count.

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Gordon Head Community Hall, 4146 Tyndall Avenue (across the road from the Gordon Head United Church Hall between Feltham and Ash)

Areas	Leaders	Telephone	Counters
Butchart's Gardens – Northern Highlands	Jerry & Gladys Anderson	656-9599	18
Central Highlands	Rick Schortinghuis	642-3596	9
Goldstream – Finlayson Arm	Susanna Solecki	595-1994	5
Thetis Lake – Hastings Flats	Bev Glover	721-1476	7
Langford Lake	Grahame Ruxton	727-6050	5
Albert Head – Triangle Mountain	David Allinson	478-0493	5
Esquimalt Lagoon – Mill Hill	Derrick Marven	748-8504	7
Esquimalt Harbour	Ron Bates	386-1264	4
Portage Inlet – The Gorge	Jeff Gaskin	384-1573	5
Victoria Harbour	Robert Chappell	388-4696	21
Beacon Hill Park	Tom Gillespie	361-1694	5
Oak Bay	Michael Tripp	477-4407	6
University – Cadboro Bay	Dannie Carsen	595-2773	8
Ten Mile Point – Arbutus Road	Bryan Gates	598-7789	8
Gordon Head – Mt. Douglas	Allen Wisely	472-1490	5
Swan Lake – Cedar Hill	Marie O'Shaughnessy	598-9680	5
Blenkinsop Lake – Panama Flats	Gordon Hart	721-1264	6
Elk Lake – Cordova Bay	Colleen O'Brien	388-4520	13
Prospect Lake – Quick's Bottom	David Fraser	479-0016	8
Martindale – Bear Hill	Brent Diakow	656-3190	8
Zero Rock (ocean)	Marilyn Lambert	477-5922	
Chain Islets (ocean)	Marilyn Lambert	477-5922	2
Juan de Fuca (ocean)	Ron Bates	386-1264	5

Letters

Fellow Naturalists,

Just today I received my newsletter, as usual I could not wait to read it from back to front, the articles contained in it were some of the best that I have seen and our new editors should be proud of what they have put together. It is easy to see why the V.N.H.S. is one of the leading naturalist clubs in British Columbia and Canada and the support that the club gets from its avid group of both amateur and professional members is reflected in its newsletter, field trips and its evening presentations.

It came as a terrible shock when I reached page 21 in the calendar of events section, to read of a new field trip to the Olympic Peninsula to visit the Makah Cultural and Research Center at Cape Flattery.

In light of the recent whale hunting by this band which reached a world wide audience and was condemned by most leading environmental and animal protection groups, fellow naturalist groups and I believe most of the general public, I believe that we as naturalists should not be seen to be supporting this native band in any way, shape or form.

This trip should be canceled straight away and that some serious thought should be given to any field trips that go against the constitution of the V.N.H.S. Our trip director should be set strict guidelines as to what is a suitable destination and content for all further field trips for this club.

I'm afraid that if this sort of event, which I personally find offensive and goes against everything that I believe in, if this is allowed to continue I will be forced to relinquish my membership and I will not support the V.N.H.S. under any circumstances.

Derrick Marven
1887 Frances Street,
Duncan, B.C. V9L 4Z9

Hi Derrick,

The Board has discussed your letter and it generated considerable debate; it is gratifying to see some neurons at work out there in this sometimes moribund society.

There was virtual unanimity that the whale hunt is not something we condone (although some feel that it is not far removed from the moose hunt or the grizzly hunt, which generate far less public angst). But it was also agreed that to isolate the Makah people would make it even less likely that dialogue, or change could occur.

While we have had strong support for taking a position as a Society on environmental issues, through the membership survey, we felt that some issues were best left to the individual. It was decided that the Society would run this trip, leaving individual members to let their own consciences decide. Our discussion found us asking ourselves if we should similarly take positions against cats, or against projects supported by Ducks Unlimited, or other hunter/fisher funded programs, or companies such as Shell Oil

(which contributed \$200,000 I believe to the Elkington property).

One thing which has come out of the discussion is that it is likely that some comment will be made to the Makah people that we as naturalists do not support the whale hunt, but respect their past and want to learn more about their culture.

The trip, incidentally, is full, and we have had no other complaints expressed about it, but your concerns (anonymously) will be explained to the participants. As it turns out, the trip may not go at all because of a problem with the ferry schedule, but obviously we wanted to deal with your concerns regardless. [Ed. Note: *The ferry schedule cancelled the trip for us.*]

If you wish your letter to be published, we are happy to do that, and we will publish the Board's position as well, but we wanted to reply to you directly first.

My greatest concern is that the Society should lose you as a member, not only because of your many contributions to our activities, but because we welcome this sort of thoughtful input. There is much we can accomplish together, and all of the directors expressed their hope that you will continue to be a member.

We would all be pleased to discuss this further with you, either as a group or individually; we're in the book, as they say.

Best regards,
Bruce

Dear Editors,

This letter is in response to the article written by Gayle Chapman in the July-August issue of *The Victoria Naturalist*. In her article, she addresses the plight of the Garry oak and questions what we can do to prevent the destruction of these trees and their ecosystem. I have come up with the following suggestions.

1. Talk about the demise of the Garry oaks to your friends, relatives, neighbours. A lot of people are not aware that they are endangered. In fact, a lot of people do not know what a Garry oak is!
2. Eliminate or reduce your lawn. Lawn mowers kill oak seedlings. As there are few 'baby' oak trees, we need to let the acorns regenerate to replace the old trees.
3. Use native plants in your garden to create a healthy habitat for the regeneration of the oaks. Native plants do not need pesticides or fertilizers. Also, using native plants reduces the need for watering.
4. Write articles about the Garry oak ecosystem for newspapers, magazines and newsletters.
5. Tell people who are put off by oak leaves that they make great garden mulch.
6. Support and get involved with organizations that work

to educate the public and prevent destruction of the Garry oak ecosystems.

7. Pay attention to habitat loss due to urbanization. Protest the loss of Garry oak trees to parking lots, roads, housing developments, etc.
8. Encourage and support your local community association to care for our Garry oaks.
9. Write letters to municipal, provincial and federal politicians. Attend municipal government meetings to stand up for the protection of Garry oaks and their ecosystem.

There are probably more ideas from others. It would be good to hear them. If we all participate in their care, we will protect these beautiful, heritage trees and their ecosystem.

Yours truly,
Pat Johnston

Pat Johnston is a Victoria native plant and waterwise gardening consultant.

Dear VNHS,

Re: The Freeman F. King Scholarship

Thank you for supporting my education. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for having been chosen to receive The Freeman F. King Scholarship. As you know, we students have many financial pressures these days, and the opportunity to receive funding from organizations like the Victoria Natural History Society is greatly appreciated. The

Greenways Advisory Committee Appointment

Our feathered, furred, leaved, and invertebrate friends and neighbours will have continued representation on the Provincial Capital Commission — Greenways Advisory Committee. VNHS director Ross Archibald has accepted appointment to the committee for a term ending July 2002, taking over the position at the committee table vacated by the tireless Norm Mogensen.

\$550 that I received through your organization is indeed timely; it makes the money crunch in this the last semester of my degree a lot easier to handle.

I am on the verge of completing a Bachelor in Science (Double Major in Biology and Geography) at the University of Victoria. That I was chosen for this particular scholarship is especially meaningful for me, as I too have a great love for all things wild. If Freeman King were alive today I would wish to thank him for his support in person. My goal is to use my education to find ways for humans and wild animals to co-exist. I will use my background in digital remote sensing and resource management from my geography studies, along with my ecology and natural science knowledge from my biology studies, to attain this goal. When I return to Graduate School, I plan to study the use of remote sensing techniques in the protection of wildlife habitat.

Again, let me say thank you for choosing me to receive The Freeman F. King Scholarship. Your help is needed and appreciated.

Sincerely,
Catherine Steckler

To the Victoria Natural History Society

I am a fourth year biology and geography student and a recipient of the VNHS scholarship. Thank you very much of your generous contribution.

After I graduate, I hope to pursue a career/masters degree in the conservation of waterbirds.

Sincerely,
Mai Yasue

Patricia Johnston, M.Sc.
Consultant
Native Plant and WaterWise Gardening
* helping you create a low maintenance,
chemical-free garden *
595-5600
patj@tinet.net

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held on the following days. **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month (directors' meetings are held at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary); **Natural History Presentations** (formally known as the General Members Meeting): the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., in Begbie 159, University of Victoria; **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre; **Parks and Conservation Committee Meeting:** the third Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre; **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., Begbie 159, University of Victoria. **Marine Night:** the last Monday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre. Locations are given in the calendar listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for further information and updates.

OCTOBER THROUGH DECEMBER

Glorious Goldstream

Offers World-Class Salmon-Viewing

Goldstream is an excellent salmon-spawning stream with thousands of chum salmon returning between October and December. These chum salmon have traveled thousands of kilometres in their four-year lifetime and are at Goldstream to continue their life cycle by spawning in the river. Good years have seen as many as 50,000 salmon return home to the Goldstream River. The Visitor Centre is open daily this fall/winter from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Weekend activities at the Centre include: fish printing, salmon slide shows, videos, and interpretive programs on the hour from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Hot coffee and baked goods are available at the book/gift store and the fire is usually lit to warm you after a walk along the river to see the spawning salmon.

Sundays, November 5 to December 3

Goldstream Birds of the Salmon Run Walk

Join a naturalist for a stroll up the Goldstream River from the estuary to watch the birds enjoying this annual salmon feast. Popular birds include the American Dipper, Red-breasted Sapsuckers and Golden Eagles, as well as many species of wintering gulls. Meet at the Goldstream Visitor Centre at 10:00 a.m.

Friday, November 10

Owling with Darren and Claudia Copley

Go on an evening excursion around Victoria searching for these elusive birds. You must pre-register for this program, as there is room for only 20 participants. Please call Goldstream at 478-9414 to reserve your space. We'll start at 9 p.m.

Sunday, November 12

Discover Laughlin Lake

Habitat Acquisition Trust and the Galiano Conservancy Association are fundraising to purchase the largest lake on Galiano Island. Birder **Mike Hoebel** will lead a special trip to introduce VNHS members to the lake. Board the 6:55 a.m. ferry from Swartz Bay to Sturdies Bay as foot passengers. Complimentary transportation on Galiano is arranged. Return ferry fare is \$5.75. Return on the 11:40 a.m. sailing from Galiano. Dress for the weather, but there will be a refreshment break at the GCA office. Weather and time permitting, other locations will be visited. Good birding from the ferry. Bus space is limited, pre-register by calling the HAT office at 995-2428.

Tuesday, November 14

VNHS Natural History Presentation

Western Tanagers and the Double Mocha Latte: Why Coffee is for the Birds

Join **Bruce Whittington** of the Habitat Acquisition Trust to discover how coffee can be made for the birds. Coffee-loving naturalists may be surprised at how their buying habits may be harming our native birds. Arm yourselves with questions and definitely bring a coffee mug. We'll see you at 7:30 p.m., Room 159, Begbie Building, UVic. Bring a friend; non-members are welcome.

Saturday, November 18

Secret Mushroom Walk

Join **Oluna and Adolf Ceska** on a mushroom walk in an undisclosed area. Learn from the experts. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:30 a.m. Call 477-1211 for more information.

Sunday, November 19

8th Annual Day Trip to Reifel Bird Sanctuary, Delta

David Allinson has arranged a group rate at Reifel for VNHS members for this annual outing. Participants will carpool from in front of the Elk-Beaver Regional Park sign on Elk Lake Drive at 5:30 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. sailing. With carpooling, costs will be about \$40.00 per person for this all-day birding bonanza. Pack your lunch and a thermos. Call David (480-9433 evenings) to confirm, as the trip will be limited to 20 participants.

Tuesday, November 21

Behind-The-Scenes Tour of the Royal BC Museum Natural History Collection

This tour will take you deep into the natural history collection of our very own museum. Curator **Mike McNall** will lead this field trip and share with you his years of experience. Don't miss this opportunity to view some of the thousands of specimens held here. Call Goldstream at 478-9414 to reserve your space. There is room for only 12 participants so you better hurry! The cost of this program is a donation to the museum. It begins at 10:30 a.m.

Friday, November 24

Gull Identification Workshop at Goldstream

Learn more than you ever thought possible about the gulls that winter on Vancouver Island. Some come from as far away as the prairies to take advantage of the winter abundance of salmon. Don't be afraid of gulls. Use this as an opportunity to practice for the Christmas bird count. Meet at the Goldstream Picnic Area parking lot by the Finlayson Road bridge at 9:00 a.m. and bring adequate winter clothing and boots. Leader TBA.

Sunday, November 26

Pelagic Birding on the M.V. Coho

Join us for a trip on the M.V. Coho on a sailing across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and back. The crossing takes 1-1/2 hours and this is

the best opportunity to see pelagic bird species (Shearwaters, Fulmars, Phalaropes). We will be birding from the bow of the boat so *dress warmly*. Bring a lunch and meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 10:00 a.m. for the 10:30 sailing of the M.V. Coho (allow plenty of time for parking). Ferry cost is \$14.00 (US) return (~\$22.00 Can), and have identification with you for customs. We'll return on the 2:00 p.m. sailing. Leader TBA.

December 8 through February 28

The Eagles Have Landed!

Visit the Nature House on the estuary at Goldstream Provincial Park during this year's Eagle Extravaganza. There are excellent viewing opportunities as hundreds of Bald Eagles feed on spawned-out salmon carcasses. The Nature House is open daily all winter from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. There will be birds of prey exhibits and great eagle viewing through spotting scopes and video cameras. Call 478-9414 for information on special programs and guest speakers happening most weekends!

Tuesday, December 12

VNHS Natural History Presentation

Members Night

Sip hot apple cider and meet with friends for an evening of Christmas cheer and slide presentations on interesting topics and destinations by our many talented members. If you wish to make a presentation, please contact **Bruce Whittington** at the HAT office (995-2428). 7:30 p.m., Room 159, Begbie Building, UVic. Bring a coffee mug and a friend; non-members are welcome.

CRD PARKS PROGRAMS

November 4

Up, Above and Under Your Feet

Join guest naturalists from the Mayne Island Naturalists Club as they lead you on a hike up Mount Parke. 1 p.m. Mount Parke Regional Park (Mayne Island).

November 5

Standing Trees and Trees with Knees

On this guided walk you'll learn about some of the major tree species in this park. Meet at the Nature House off Munn Road. 1 p.m. Francis/King Regional Park.

November 11

Birding at Elk Lake

Join our guest naturalist. Meet at the map kiosk in the Hamsterly Beach parking lot off Brookleigh Road. BC Transit #70 or 75. 9 a.m. Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park.

November 12

Strait Goods

For many years, the straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca have provided a living for coastal people. Find out about the early hunting and gathering. Meet at the map kiosk on Homathko Rd., end of Island View Beach Rd. 1 p.m. Island View Beach Regional Park.

November 13

Tree ID

Have you ever wondered how to identify our local trees? Meet at the

Saturday, December 16

Christmas Bird Count 2000 and After The Count Gathering

Join in a century old tradition, helping to provide records of our winter bird populations. Join in the camaraderie after the count at 7:00 p.m. Gordon Head Community Hall, 4146 Tyndall Avenue (across the road from the Gordon Head United Church Hall between Feltham and Ash). For more information about the Count, contact **Dannie Carsen** at 595-2773. **Ann Nighthingale** is taking care of the After Count Gathering, phone 652-6450.

Saturday, December 16

Bald Eagles and BC Hydro; How We Can Help

John Maher of BC Hydro comes to Goldstream for this informative slide and prop talk about what BC Hydro and *you* can do to ensure the survival of Bald Eagles in BC. Use this as an opportunity to view the hundreds of over-wintering eagles. Meet at the Freeman King Nature House at Goldstream Provincial Park at 1:00 p.m. Call 478-9414 for more information.

Sunday, December 17

Birds of Prey

Join **Myke Chutter**, the Provincial Bird Specialist, in a look at the different species of birds of prey in B.C., their status in the province and what is being done to help them. Meet at the Freeman King Nature House at Goldstream Provincial Park at 1:00 p.m. for this entertaining presentation. Call 478-9414 for more information.

Nature House off Munn Rd. 1 p.m. Francis King Regional Park.

November 18

Hike from Park to Park (see Outings for Adults for details)

November 19

Operation Birdfeeder (special event)

A special day devoted to birds and bird feeding. 11 a.m.- 4 p.m. (Walk at 9 a.m.). Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary.

November 22

Some Like it Wet (see Parent and Tots for details)

November 23

Owl Prowl

Join us on a forest walk. Pre-registration and fee: \$5 + GST/person. Phone 478-3344. 8 p.m. (Highlands) adults and children 12+.

November 25

Cedar: Tree of Life

Meet at the Nature House off Munn Rd. 1 p.m. Francis/King Regional Park.

November 26

Mystery Creature

"Riddle me, riddle me through the park. Find the answers before it gets dark." Meet in the Durrance Lake parking lot off Willis Point Rd. 1 p.m. Mount Work Regional Park (Highlands).

For more information contact CRD Parks at (250) 478-3344



**The Victoria
NATURALIST**

P.O. Box 5220, Stn. B.,
Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4